FLITTER
FLIT
AH —
AH-
CHAPTER 3
KING'S GAME ORIGINS
STORY BY NOBUAKI KANAZAWA
ART BY J-TA YAMADA
BZZ
STING
STING
STING
PAAAAAAAAH

UWAAAA
BZZ
BZZ
GET AWAY FROM THE NEST!
COME DOWN!
ENOUGH!
RYUU-JI!

GIANT HORNETS.
I SAW SOMEONE GET STUNG DOING FIELD WORK ONE TIME.
THAT ONE STING LEFT HIS CALF SWOLLEN AND BRUISED FOR A MONTH...
AND I'VE READ THAT MULTIPLE STINGS CAN KILL!
IF ANY MORE OF THEM GET RYUUJI...!

WHUMP
SNAP
BWO
OM
EVERY-
ONE—
GET
BACK!
DASH

ON IT!
GOTCHA!
BZZZ
BZZZ
BZZZ
FLAP
YUUJI! GET THE ONES IN THE AIR!
YANK
WE CAN JUST KILL THE STRAG-GLERS!
SWIFF
SWIFF

I THINK THAT DOES IT FOR THE ONES THAT ESCAPED.
GOOD!
OKAY NATSUKO, HOLD THE BAG DOWN.
NOD!
WHATEVER YOU DO, DON'T LIFT IT OFF THE GROUND!
SQUEEZE
PSSSHHHHHH
WE'LL HAVE MORE THAN ENOUGH IN THE NEST!
PLOP
PLOP
PLOP
VEEEEE

SLUMP
RYUU-JI!
ARE YOU OKAY?!
HE—
HE'S FALLING—
DASH

WHUD
HH!
RYUU—
FLOP!
ROLL

NO...
RRR!
STINKIN' LITTLE—
BZZ
BZZ
SKITTER

ZZZZ
GET OFF!
SMACK
KSSH!
KAZU-NARI!
IS RYUUJI ALL RIGHT?
I DON'T KNOW...
HE'S NOT MOVING...
DAMNIT! I SHOULD'VE CLIMBED UP IN-STEAD!

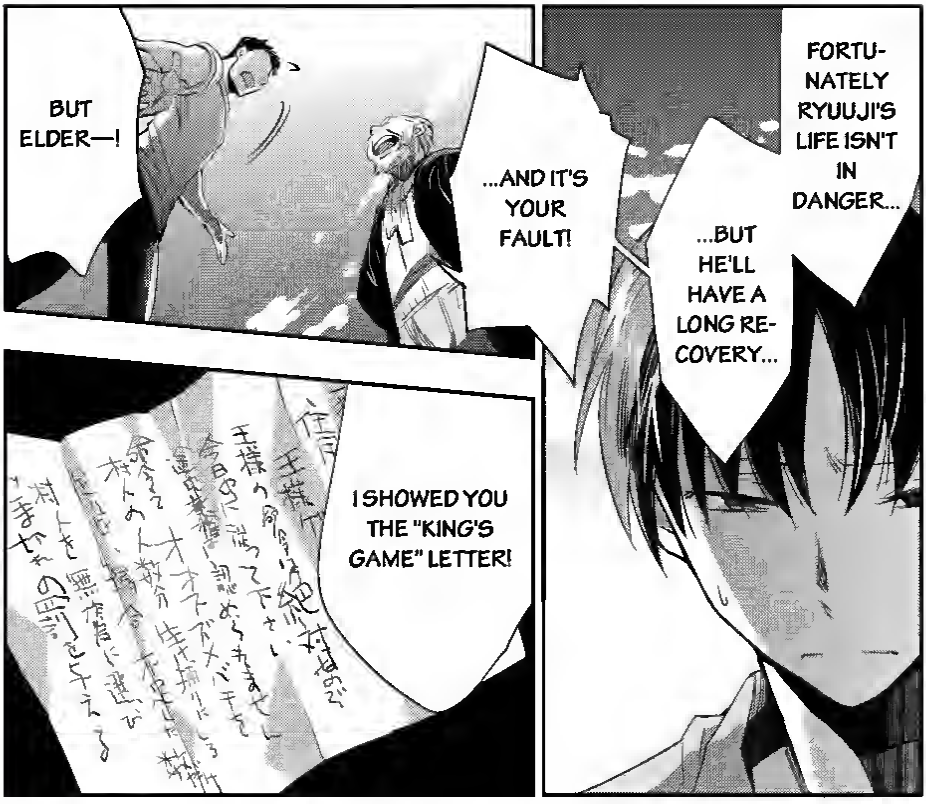
SHFF
I'LL CARRY HIM.
KAZUNARI, TAKE CARE OF THE HORNET'S NEST!
NOW HURRY, WE NEED TO GET HIM TO THE HOSPITAL!
THEN IT'D BE YOU ON THE GROUND. IT WOULDN'T HAVE MATTERED!
HUP!
SLIP

BAP
SKITTER
SKITTER
IF WE LOSE THOSE BEES THEN RYUUJI WILL HAVE SUFFERED FOR NOTHING!
NOD

WE'LL WRAP THIS UP AND GET DOWN FROM THE MOUNTAIN!
SMACK
HE'S RIGHT.
WINCE
KAZUYA! THE RUBBER GLOVES!
WE'VE GOTTA FINISH THIS!
R-RIGHT
TIME TO END THIS GAME!
I'LL PUT THE HORNETS IN THE CAGE!
AS FAST AS WE CAN!

RYUUJI REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS WHILE HIS MOM, FUMIKO-SAN, CALLED THEIR FAMILY DOCTOR...
BUT HE WAS IN NO CONDITION TO TALK.
YOU IDIOTS!
WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?!

DAIKI'S AND SUZUYO'S SUICIDES ALREADY HAVE THE VILLAGE IN AN UPROAR!
AND YOU DAMN KIDS ALL DECIDE TO WANDER AROUND THE MOUNTAINS...
...LOOKING FOR A BEE HIVE?!

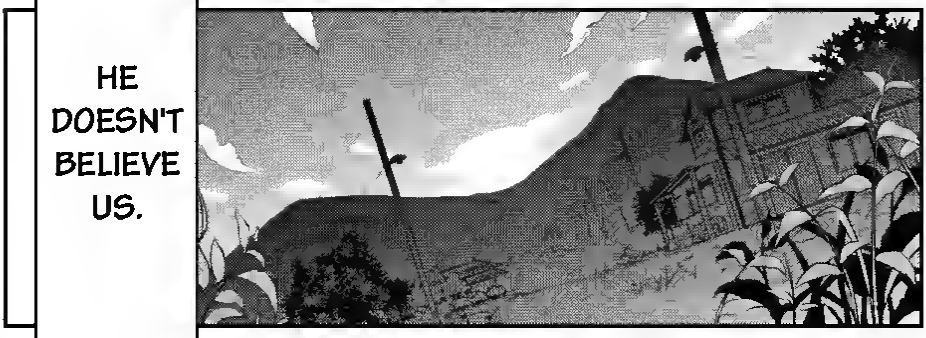

FORTUNATELY RYUUJI'S LIFE ISN'T IN DANGER...
...BUT HE'LL HAVE A LONG RECOVERY...
...AND IT'S YOUR FAULT!
BUT ELDER—!
I SHOWED YOU THE "KING'S GAME" LETTER!

DAIKI AND SUZUYO DIED EXACTLY HOW THE LETTER DESCRIBED.
IF WE HADN'T CAUGHT ONE HORNET FOR EACH VILLAGER—
BUT CHOPPED UP?!
ARE YOU ADDLED, BOY?!
IMPOSSIBLE I SAY, IMPOSSIBLE!!
IT'S ALL A FOOLISH PRANK!
GLARE
ELDER, DO YOU ACTUALLY THINK ONE OF US WROTE THEM?!

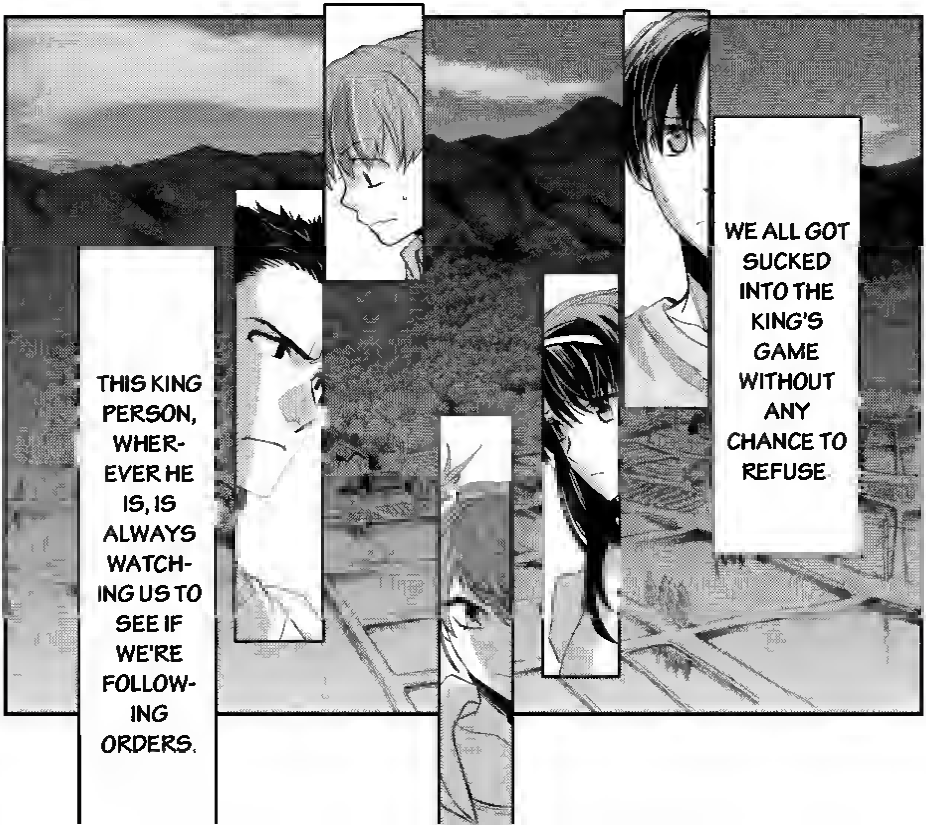
E-
NOUGH!
IF THE KING IS REAL...
...WE NEED TO FIGURE OUT WHO IT IS AS SOON—

SHOVE
TODAY ARE THE WAKES FOR DAIKI AND SUZUYO...
...AND ALL OF YOU ARE GOING TO HELP PREPARE!

JUST AS WE FEARED.


HE DOESN'T BELIEVE US.

RIGHT. WE COMPLETED THE TASK, AFTER ALL
FOR NOW, WE SHOULD KEEP A CLOSE EYE ON ALL THE VILLAGERS.
YOU CAN'T REALLY BLAME HIM.
SPLOOSH
DAMN!
WHY WON'T HE LISTEN?!


WE ALL GOT SUCKED INTO THE KING'S GAME WITHOUT ANY CHANCE TO REFUSE.
THIS KING PERSON, WHEREVER HE IS, IS ALWAYS WATCHING US TO SEE IF WE'RE FOLLOWING ORDERS.

WILL RYUU-JI...
...BE OKAY?
UMM...
THE KING'S LETTER KICKED OFF THE WHOLE STUPID HORNET HUNT.
IF WE HADN'T GOTTEN IT, RYUUJI WOULD BE...
WITH HIS EVIL IN-TENT...
YEAH, WE COULD'VE SPREAD A BIG BLANKET UN-DERNEATH AND KNOCKED THE WHOLE NEST OFF IT PROBABLY WOULD'VE BEEN SAFER. .
GASP
THERE MUST'VE BEEN A BETTER WAY TO GET THAT NEST OFF THE CLIFF.
HE GOT STUNG SO MANY TIMES...
AND ON HIS FACE, TOO...

I-I'M SORRY!
I ONLY JUST THOUGHT OF IT MYSELF...
I'VE BEEN TRYING TO THINK WHAT ELSE WE COULD'VE DONE THIS WHOLE TIME.
NATSU-KO!
WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY THAT BE-FORE?!
OH MAN, THERE WERE BETTER WAYS!
IF I'D JUST THOUGHT ABOUT IT MORE BEFORE I OPENED MY MOUTH!

KAZU-NARI...
DID WE MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE?
WAS IT WORTH RYUUJI GETTING SO HURT?
WAS...

WHAP
NO!
NO POINT IN HAVING REGRETS NOW.
IF THAT'S TRUE, THEN I'M RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT HAPPENS TO RYUUJI—
WAS I WRONG?
WHAT IF IT WAS ALL JUST A COINCIDENCE, AND THE KING'S LETTER WAS JUST A PRANK?
IT'S AWFUL WHAT HAPPENED TO RYUUJI...
...BUT WE HAVE TO BELIEVE WE DID THE RIGHT THING.

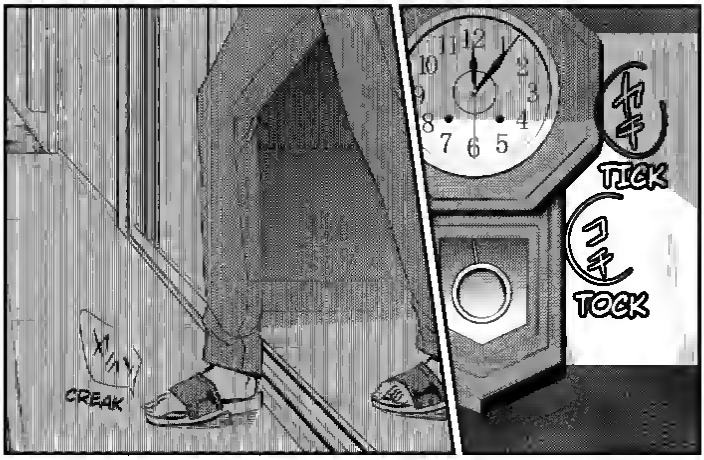
EVEN IF WE WERE WRONG...
...WE HAVE TO BE-LIEVE WE'RE RIGHT.
YOU. THINK SO?
MICHIKO..
YEAH, ABSO-LUTELY.
SMILE
OF COURSE.

IF YOU REALLY FEEL BAD ABOUT IT, GO GIVE HIM HIS REWARD KISS.
HE SEEMED TO BE EAGER TO GET ONE.
WHA—
HE WANTED YOU TO DO IT, MICHIKO!
SMOOCH
I'M NOT KISSING ANOTHER BOY!
OH?
HOW ABOUT YUUJI OR KAZUYA?
OKAY.
WHADDYA THINK?
GIM-ME A BREAK!
LEEEEEP
HAW
HAW
WORRYING'S NOT GONNA HELP RYUUJI HEAL ANY FASTER.
EX-ACTLY!
YEAH...

GOOD, THAT'LL MEAN WE FOL-LOWED THE ORDER!
I'LL LET THEM FREE AFTER MIDNIGHT.
YEAH, I COUNTED OUT ONE FOR EACH VILLAGER AND PUT THEM IN MY DRAWER.
SO, KAZU-NARI..
ARE WE ALL SET WITH THE HORNETS?
RIGHT, WE SHOULD KEEP THEM TIL "THE END OF THE DAY..."
BUT...
HOW IS HE CHECKING...
...THAT WE DID WHAT THE LETTER SAYS?
WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?
BITE

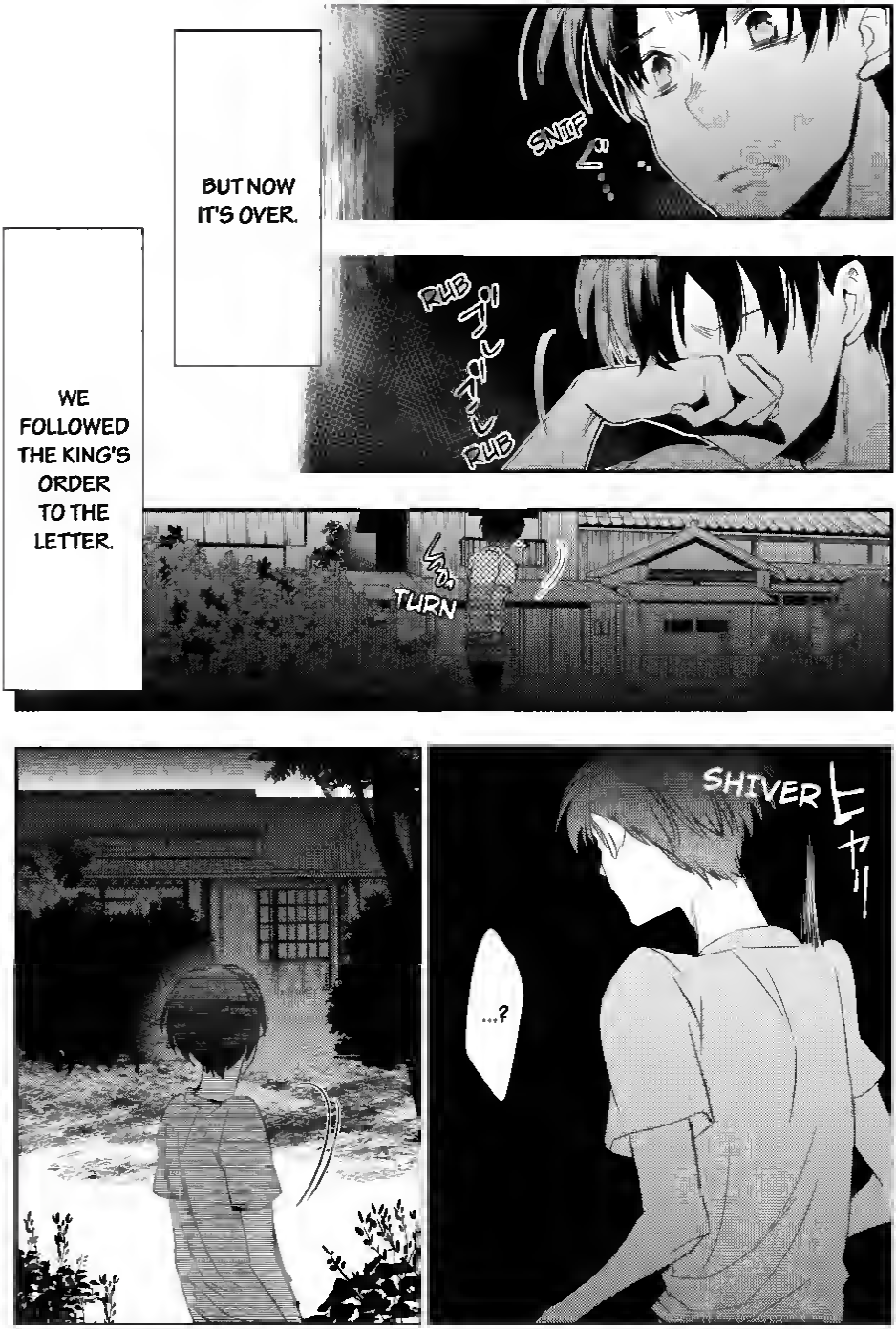
BA-DUM
ONLY WE KNOW WHETHER OR NOT WE CAUGHT THE HORNETS, RIGHT?
AL-THOUGH WE DID TELL THE ELDER...
BA-DUM
THAT'S TRUE.
AND HOW'D HE KNOW ONLY SUZUYO DIDN'T TOUCH THE CORPSE LAST NIGHT?
ONLY TWO POSSIBILI-TIES
EITHER THE "KING" WAS HIDING IN THE GRAVE-YARD WATCHING US...
BA-DUM
...OR?
BA-DUM

OR THE KING...
...IS ONE OF US.



WEDNESDAY
AUGUST 10,
12:07 A.M.

THAT OUGHTTA DO IT...
NOR-MALLY IT'S PITCH DARK AT THIS HOUR...
MUST BE THE WAKES FOR DAIKI AND SUZUYO.
SUZUYO WAS TWO YEARS YOUNGER THAN ME AND KIND OF A PILL.
DAIKI WAS STILL SO YOUNG, HE LOOKED UP TO ME LIKE AN OLDER BROTHER.


BUT NOW IT'S OVER.
SNIFF
RUB
RUB
WE FOLLOWED THE KING'S ORDER TO THE LETTER.
TURN
SHIVER
...?

SACHIKO-SAN LEFT HER DOOR OPEN.
MUST BE HELPING OUT AT THE WAKES.

YEAH... TOMORROW I'LL PAY MY LAST RESPECTS TO THE TWO OF THEM.

COCKADOODLEDOOO
CHIRP
CHIRP
KICK
COCKADOODLEDOOO
YAWN
WOKE UP TOO EARLY...
FIVE-THIRTY...
CHEEP CHEEP CHEEP
SKRITCH
SKRITCH
BU-GAAAWK
DOESN'T FEEL LIKE I SLEPT A WINK...
BLIK BLIK BLIK
HMM?
BLIK BLIK

WHAT'RE THOSE...
...PINK CHUNKS?
SCRUNCH
SCRUNCH
RATTLE

BUT WHAT WAS THAT PINK STUFF?
GLANCE
GLANCE
STILL WIDE OPEN.. DID SHE LEAVE FOR THE FIELDS AND FORGET TO CLOSE IT? FOR A 74 YEAR-OLD, SACHIKO-SAN'S STILL A GO-GETTER.
BUK
FLAP
FLAP
BUK

AAA
HUMAN...
AH

...FLESH?!

WHY...
FLUMP
WHY IS THERE A MANGLED CORPSE IN SACHIKO-SAN'S YARD...?!
SHUD
DER
N-N-NO—!
IS... IS...
IS THAT...
SACHIKO-SAN...?